



By Hilda Richmond.

The weather certainly was queer for the last day of December. The sun shone brightly down on leafless trees and brown fields, and a fresh warm breeze blew from the south making it like a day in late September. The wide expanse of meadows and wheat fields stretching away back of the dozen farm-houses that composed the tiny village seemed to be basking in the mellow, hazy sunlight that covered the whole landscape as with a garment. With a sigh Miss Julia Hunt hung the yellow almanac behind the shining stove in the kitchen, where yellowed manna had hung for more than fifty years, and then went to the dining-room to pack away her precious china and ornaments.

"There's one thing," she said to Mary Finnegan, the maid of all work, "those boys are not going into the parlor. I'll lock the door to-night and not open it till they are gone. I'm not going to have my mother's furniture scratched and spoiled by a lot of city boys. It was very foolish of me to promise Louise that I would entertain part of her mission class of news-boys and bootblacks, but she begged so hard that I couldn't help it. She says one day in the country is like a glimpse of Heaven to those half-starved little creatures, but I'm afraid it will not be like a glimpse of Heaven for us. I had planned to have Mike take them for a long sleighride in the bob sled, but here the weather must turn as warm as May and spoil my plans. If we get through the morning, we shall be all right, for I have tickets for the entertainment at the school-house in

store for some candy, and on the way back I'll stop for the magic lantern. This house will look as if a whirlwind had struck it by to-morrow night, but it can't be helped, I suppose. I'll have more sense next time," she added grimly.

As the train stopped at the little station the next morning, ten boys ranging from ten to fifteen years, were met by Miss Julia and escorted home much as if she were in charge of so many Indians. They were armed with balls and bats, and before they were half way to the house, one of them pointed to Miss Hunt's big pasture field, and said, "Hully gee! Ain't that a bully place for a game?"

"Certainly, there are boys in the village. If you go out and start a game, I guess it won't be long till they will all be with you," said Miss Hunt, who had very little acquaintance with boys, but had noticed that they were not long in finding out if anything new was going on.

Before the location of the bases had been settled, three recruits joined the ranks and were soon offering to hurry up enough more for the match game.

"Dear me, Mary," lamented Miss Hunt, as a new difficulty stared her in the face, "I was just going to run out with the cookies and some apples for the boys, but there are ten or twelve extra ones playing with them. They must be hungry after their long ride this morning, but what can I do?"

"Sure an' I'll run to Mrs. Brown's and get the batch she made yesterday. Her Mollie said their company couldn't come today."

"The very thing!" And with a load off her mind Miss Julia hastened across the street.

"Sell them! I guess not. My Joe and Ned are screaming out there as loud as the rest. You may have them all, and these pies, too, for Sister Jane can't come today. I'll help you carry 'em."

Miss Hunt was shocked at the language, but hope rose in her heart. It might be possible that the exquisite, cloudless weather favored her after all. She looked at the thin clothing

shall begin peeling potatoes at once. No wonder Louise said over and over again to 'prepare plenty of food.'

"I saw you going out with a lunch for the boys," said Mrs. Race, coming to meet them with a large basket. "I suppose my three are out there, so it is only fair that I should help. Do you think they will like these?" and she displayed a lot of warm, sugary crullers.

"Like them?" laughed Mrs. Brown. "They ate every thing we had in five minutes. Don't take these out now. Wait till we have a chance to take something. It is always well to have a reserve."

"Yes, indeed," said Miss Hunt. "If you can come in and make up about a bushel of cookies, I shall be indebted to you forever, Mrs. Race. I thought I had enough dinner for twenty boys, but I am afraid not now."

All three women were so busy preparing dinner, that an hour slipped past before anyone thought of the baseball players. Even then it is doubtful if they would have been remembered if the whole troop had not come to the house ostensibly to get a drink, but really to see if more cookies would not be forthcoming. Miss Hunt was overcome with remorse to think she had neglected her guests, and several pies soon followed the crullers as an atonement for her sin of omission.

"Now, boys," she said as the procession started, each boy with a large pumpkin pie triangle in one hand and a rosy apple in the other, "dinner will be ready in an hour or two and we want you to have good appetites."

"We'll be there," sang out the captain, briefly, leading the way back to the field.

"I am sorry all the boys can't stay to dinner," said Miss Hunt. "Do you suppose there would be enough for all?"

"I am afraid not," said Mrs. Race, surveying the contents of pots, kettles and pans. "I am sorry, too, for they are having such a good time together."

"I'll run down and see if Mrs. Lake has anything to spare. Perhaps we can arrange for all to stay," said Mrs. Brown. "Now don't object, Julia. There are six little Lakes out in your pasture field and their mother will be delighted to help."

"Of course she will," said Mrs. Lake at the door. "Nellie told me what is going on down here, and I came right away to offer my services, for of course my boys are out there with the rest. I'll be back in a few minutes with my contribution."

"The dining-room only holds twelve," announced Mary Finnegan, red-faced from a struggle with the table.

"Let's set one table in the sitting-room," said Julia, forgetting that she had intended to lock up her parlor and sitting-room.

When dinner was finally ready, not a boy was in the pasture field. The bats were thrown aside, the catcher's mask dangled from the fence, and the barn-rod reserved seats for spectators were empty. Far away faint shouts announced that a lively chase was going on. Miss Hunt was in despair but not so the mothers.

"They have seen a rabbit or a squirrel," said Mrs. Lake, calmly, as she rang the big old dinner bell that had been silent for twenty years. "My dear Julia, if you had ever lived in the same house with the youngsters, you would be surprised at nothing. Look Mrs. Brown filling a tub with warm water. She knows what condition their hands and faces will be in."

The squirrel hunt was abandoned at the first sound of the bell, and across the fields streamed the visitors and besides all the well boys that the village boasted. Nearly every one of the dozen houses in the group was represented in the motley crowd of dirty urchins. Under the direction of Mrs. Brown, the whole party was soon seated with soap and scrubbed to that lady's satisfaction. They could scarcely restrain themselves under her rigid inspection, for near at hand stretched the long tables loaded with all sorts of delicious things foreign to the city waifs. Country boys take good food as a matter of course, but three hours of baseball and chasing the nimble squirrel had made everybody ravenous.

"Golly," said Lame Jimmie, taking in the turkey, chicken, bread, vegetables, jellies, pickles, cake, pie, and fruit with which the long table was filled. "I wish every day was New Year's."

How they all enjoyed that dinner! Miss Hunt battered bread till her fingers ached. Mrs. Brown ladled out quarts of gravy. Mary collected a peek of bones to make room near the loaded plates for her dishes of apple sauce and peaches, while the other women, who had been joined by two more mothers, sliced ham, and answered calls for more turkey and everything else on the bill of fare.

"If you ladies will come to the game, we'll give you the best reserved seats," said the captain of the city nine, when a plate of delicious plum pudding was placed before him. As the best reserved seats were on the roof of Miss Hunt's cow barn, the ladies declined with thanks.

"We are very much obliged," said Miss Hunt, "but the dishes must be washed and preparations made for supper."

"Does he get supper, too?" asked a bootblack, laying down a piece of frosted cake with a sigh. "I've been a eatin' enough for supper now."

"Corse we does," said another.

"Dear ladies is de real ting," "And to think," said Miss Hunt to herself as the train pulled out and the echo of the cheers her guests had just given for her was still ringing in her ears. "I was afraid to have the poor little souls come into my house. They said it was the happiest day they ever spent, and I'm ashamed of my selfishness. They behaved like gentlemen—every one of them, and we've not have injured a thing in the house. When they come back next Fourth of July I'll give them a picnic that is worthy of the name, and do it without calling on all the neighbors for help, too.—Ohio Farmer."

A CONTINUOUS OPERATION.

The World Made New Every Day and Every Day a Renewed Opportunity for Fresh Beginnings.

While we may welcome with joy our impulse to begin a new life with the new year, "leaving behind the things that are past," except as we carry their remembrance as a warning against going the same way again, yet irresistibly, the thought must come, why need we wait for the New Year's Day of the calendar, or why need we plan for a year? Every day is a New Year's Day, says the Washington Home Magazine, "every day is the world made new." Every day we have opportunity for fresh beginnings. If we could free ourselves sufficiently from the tangle of affairs in which our lives are bound, so that each day we might realize that we had indeed before us a gift of time, fresh from the hand of God in which we might "quit ourselves like men," what a zest and inspiration that realization would give to our daily tasks, however monotonous or dreary they might be.

Perhaps this year we can learn that: "Each man's New Year's morn' come true. More of a festival to keep. All nights are sacred nights to make Confession and resolve and prayer; All days are sacred to awake. New gladness in the sunnier air. Only a night from old to new! Only a sleep from night to morn! The new is but the old come true. Each sunrise sees a New Year born."

What We Need to Do.

We need to get back to simpler and clearer comprehension of ordinary things. We are exercising too much skill in befuddling ourselves, in confusing our own minds. We are too much disposed to admire the man who can make black seem white, rather than the man who can show us the difference between the two. One of our daily papers well says: "The commands and maxims of the old morality and religion are worth more to society to-day than ever they were in the days that are gone. There is more reason now why they should be set forth honestly and impressively without complication or confusion than at any other period in the history of the world."

Without these things we can only worry ourselves into a fret and fever which will do us no good. Our best of time will bring us nothing, and the expectation of the years will turn to ashes.

But upon honesty, sincerity and simplicity the whole order of things waits, and for clean hands, clear hearts and whole souls the century has its victory and its blessing.—Chicago Advance.

HAD NO USE FOR IT.



Mr. Wit—I heard that you received a beautiful pocketbook for a New Year's present."

Mr. Nit—That's right, but what use is a pocketbook to a fellow who went broke on presents a week ago?

Stockings on New Year's Eve.

In France the children do not hang up their stockings on Christmas, but on New Year's Eve. These are not filled by Santa Claus, but by the Christ child. He comes with a whole convoy of angels to help him carry the gifts which he brings to make the little ones happy. The latter do not enter the parlors where the stockings are hung until each one has knelt before the father of the family and received his blessing.

Self-Approval.

"Have you kept your New Year's resolutions?" "Yes, I have faithfully kept a New Year's resolution that I made three or four years ago."

"What was it?"

"Never to make any more resolutions."—Washington Star.

GREAT STRIDES MADE.

Wonderful Richness of the Soil of Western Canada Has Turned the Tide of Immigration.

The great strides which Western Canada is making, and the wonderful richness of the soil, is creating considerable excitement, not only in Canada, but in the United States and Great Britain. The large crops of the past two years, with phenomenal yields, have enacted a movement towards the west, which will not be checked until every available homestead is taken. The Edmonton Bulletin, one of the "farthest north" newspapers, in a recent article on the Northwest as a wide and open field, says: "There must be fertile soil, there must be a suitable climate, there must be the possibility of building up a modern civilization; and the conditions must be such that labor can reach the land; or in other words, land must be cheap. The Canadian Northwest contains the largest unbroken area of country on the continent, or in the world fulfilling these conditions. In its thousand miles of plain which stretches from the Lake of the Woods to the Rocky Mountains Canada is able to offer land to the landless of the continent, and of the world. This year (1902), the only complaint, over all the vast stretch of territory, of the farmers and ranchers, is that the railways have not sufficient rolling stock to move to market the returns of the past season."

The area under crop in Western Canada in 1902 was 1,987,330 acres. Yield 1902, 117,922,754 bushels. Wealth waits on industry in Canada. There is Plenty of Room.

Prices have advanced in Western Canada 50 per cent. in the last two years, and the upward movement seems still on. The migration into Canada is becoming notable. Somebody has estimated that 25,000 acres of Canadian land are sold a day to people from the United States.

Whatever doubts there have been as to the suitability of the Canadian Northwest for settlement, those doubts have been set at rest by the successive yields of previous years, and by the crowning glory of the past year (1902), which gives solid assurance as to possibilities that would not otherwise have been believed. The fact of the grain production of the past season in Manitoba and the Northwest, 117,922,754 bushels from 1,987,330 acres, and that a certain number of farmers have produced a greater value of wheat, oats, and cattle for sale than any other equal number anywhere else in the known world, is the best possible answer to the question: "Is there wealth in the Northwest?" Not only in the Northwest but in the whole country has there been prosperity.

The Canadian Northwest is not all alike in its production. Wheat growing is the specialty of one part, cattle ranching of another, and mixed farming—the growth of grain and live stock together—of still another. Speaking roughly, the southern parts of the Territories and Manitoba are wheat growing; the southwestern part of the Territories is ranching, and the northern part of the Territories is mixed farming. Differences of soil, climate, and other conditions are the causes of these differences in agriculture in the various sections. But it is safe to say that in no other area of the world is there an equal possibility of the production of wealth from the soil, whether by one branch of agriculture or another.

Carelessly Addressed Letters.

We have typewriters and skilled stenographers and all kinds of patent machines to make the business of correspondence safe and secure. And we are still careless. We spend days getting up an important document, seal it in an envelope and then address it in such a villainous and slovenly manner that no human being can hope to decipher it.

The dead letter office report for the last fiscal year clinches the fact.

Nearly 10,000,000 pieces of mail matter reached it, and the increase over the preceding year was nine per cent.

In 50,869 parcels and letters there was money amounting to \$48,498, and commercial papers worth \$1,399,938.

Some of us ought to go to night school.—St. Paul News.

Enlarging London Bridge.

The London county council has begun to widen London bridge by adding a footway to each side of it. The bridge is now 53 feet wide, and with the two footpaths it will be 65 feet. The work presents no very great problems, and will cost in the neighborhood of \$500,000. The bridge was begun in 1824, and was seven years in building. Soon after its completion, when the piles around the foundation were withdrawn, it began to settle, but the movement was so slight that no harm was done. Its total cost up to date has been about \$10,000,000.—N. Y. Commercial Advertiser.



"Hully Gee! Ain't That a Bully Place for a Game?"

the afternoon, and they return on the six o'clock train. Louise said all that was necessary was to feed them well, and I would have no trouble."

"Maybe it will snow yet," said Mary, examining the little house out of which an old man was said to appear in case a storm was brewing. But the smiling little old lady was on guard, and that is a sure sign of fair weather.

"No such luck," exclaimed the mistresses. "The almanac says 'fair and warmer' for to-morrow. Do you think you will have to hunt up the checker board and dominoes in the attic, Mary?"

"Sure an' I'll do that as soon as the bird is stuffed."

If I thought they wouldn't break it, I'd run over to Mrs. Brown's and borrow the boys' magic lantern. I could darken the sitting-room and show off the pictures, but perhaps I'd better not risk it. How many ginger cookies did you bake this morning?"

"Four dozen," replied Mary promptly.

"Let me see. Ten boys are coming. That will be plenty for each to have three or four for lunch. Louise said such stress on having plenty to eat that I am glad you baked too many rather than not enough. You need not make the tarts if we have mince and pumpkin pie."

"How do you do?" said a brisk voice at the open door. I just stopped to tell you that the entertainment for to-morrow is all off. Two of the Gray children are down with the measles, and as they had the leading parts, it can't be given. I am around refunding money to the people who bought tickets."

"Troubles never come singly," observed Miss Julia as she exchanged eleven bits of pasteboard for a handful of small coins. Mary I'll be back in half an hour. I'm going to the